

Message Text

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S E C R E T LONDON 04129

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PARM, UK

SUBJECT: NATO STATEMENT ON ERW

REF: (A) STATE 65763; (B) LONDON 40L9

1. BRITISH REACTION AT WORKING LEVEL IN BOTH FCO AND MOD TO US NON-PAPER REFTEL (A) IS QUITE NEGATIVE. HMG SOURCES CONTEND THAT US LANGUAGE RETAINS NONE OF THE IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THE UK TEXT. IN PARTICULAR, IT DOES NOT DRAW ATTENTION TO THE SOVIET ARMORED THREAT WHICH, IN UK VIEW, PROVIDES MOST CONVINCING RATIONALE FOR DEPLOYMENT OF ERW. NOR, ACCORDING TO BRITISH SOURCES, DOES IT CALL FOR RESTRAINT IN SOVIET BUILDUP OF CONVENTIONAL FORCES IN EUROPE AND NEED FOR CONSTRUCTIVE EASTERN RESPONSE IN MBFR. THIS LATTER POINT IS ONE TO WHICH DAVID OWEN ATTACHES PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE.

2. AS FOR TEXT OF US NON-PAPER ITSELF, BRITISH SOURCES FOUND IT WORDY AND RAMBLING. THEY WERE PARTICULARLY PERPLEXED THAT ERW-SS20 LINKAGE WAS "HIDDEN AWAY" IN STATEMENT.

3. COMMENT: WORKING LEVEL IN HMG CLEARLY DOES NOT UNDERSTAND US RESISTANCE TO UK PAPER. IN THEIR VIEW,
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BRITISH HAVE ACCEPTED ESSENCE OF US POSITION ON CALLING FOR SPECIFIC ERW-SS20 LINKAGE, AND HAVE SIMPLIFIED NATO DEBATE BY AGREEING TO DROP IDEA OF TRADE-OFF BETWEEN ERW AND GENERALIZED SOVIET RESTRAINT. HAVING DONE THIS, BRITISH OFFICIALS SEEM TO BE LOOKING FOR SOME GIVE IN WASHINGTON'S POSITION WHICH WOULD PROVIDE LADDER ON WHICH DAVID OWEN CAN CLIMB DOWN FROM HIS EARLIER IDEA.

THEY ALSO OBVIOUSLY GENUINELY BELIEVE THAT PUTTING ERW-SS20 TRADE-OFF IN LARGER CONTEXT OF SOVIET THREAT TO EUROPE WILL MORE EFFECTIVELY MOBILIZE PUBLIC OPINION BEHIND ALLIANCE POSITION.

4. US NON-PAPER HAS NOT YET BEEN PRESENTED TO MINISTERS HERE AND SOURCES CAUTION THAT THEIR NEGATIVE VIEWS COULD BE OVERRULED BY THEIR SUPERIORS. WE DOUBT IT. OUR GUESS IS THAT BRITISH RESPONSE WILL BE ALONG LINES DESCRIBED ABOVE AND REQUIRE FURTHER EFFORTS TO AGREE TO MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE TEXT.

5. BRITISH OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY CANDID IN THEIR REACTION. PLEASE PROTECT.

6. DEPARTMENT REPEAT AS APPROPRIATE.

BREWSTER

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